

PERSONAL PAPERS CHECKLIST

MAY BE OK TO TAKE:

- ☒ Non-record materials
- ☒ Non-record copies of documents provided that removal won't:
 - Diminish the official record of the agency
 - Violate confidentiality required by national security, privacy, or other interests provided by law
 - Exceed normal administrative business economies

WHAT'S OK?

- ☒ Copies of your own personal actions, performance standards, travel vouchers and similar documents
- ☒ Materials for your activities as a member of a union or professional association or Tribal government
- ☒ A journal of daily events maintained for your personal use that is separate from the calendar of daily activities you use for your job
- ☒ Notes taken for your personal use at a training course
- ☒ Notes taken for your personal use at a meeting that are not circulated to other staff, and not used in the transaction of government business

WHAT'S NOT OK?

- ☒ Calendars, appointment books, schedules of activities, etc., that record your activities as a government employee
- ☒ Drafts, background materials, notes (other than those cited in the example of personal papers) and other documents prepared in the course of your assigned duties even though they are not made part of the "official file"
- ☒ Speeches given or articles written in your capacity as an agency employee or government official
- ☒ Notes used to give a briefing to agency staff

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR NEED HELP TO DETERMINE THE STATUS OF SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS CONTACT THE INDIAN AFFAIRS RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AT
505-346-7950
OR BY E-MAIL TO
IARM@os.doi.gov

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL TRUSTEE FOR AMERICAN INDIANS



BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

INDIAN AFFAIRS RECORDS MANAGEMENT

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PERSONAL PAPERS

On the Record with
the Indian Affairs Records
Management
Program

WHAT'S YOURS? WHAT'S NOT YOURS? WHAT CAN YOU TAKE? WHAT CAN'T YOU TAKE?

It doesn't matter if you're leaving government service completely; going from a job in one government agency to a job in another government agency; or just moving from one job to another job in the same government agency.

It doesn't matter if you're a Senior Executive Service office director around for the duration of a presidential term; a long time career mid-level branch manager; or an introductory level employee new to the government. The same rules apply to you. You just can't arbitrarily take materials with you when you move from job to job or leave public service. As a matter of fact, criminal penalties can be placed against you for the unlawful removal of Federal records.

The Records Disposal Act specifies that records of the U.S. government may not be removed or destroyed except as provided under the Act. None of its provisions permit employees to remove records. In addition, the Act requires agencies to establish safeguards against the removal or loss of records—and initiate action to recover unlawfully removed records.



- Private papers brought into, created, or received in the office: family and personal correspondence; materials documenting professional activities, outside business, or political pursuits; manuscripts, drafts for books and articles; volunteer and community service records
- Work-related papers: diaries, journals, notes, personal calendars and appointment schedules even though they may contain work related information if used as reminders or personal observations on work related topics and not for the transaction of government business

HOW SHOULD I HANDLE PERSONAL PAPERS?

According to government record keeping practices you should file them separate from agency records and clearly label them as personal papers. This applies to electronic documents as well.

I HAVE A CALENDAR I USE TO RECORD BOTH MY WORK AND PERSONAL ACTIVITIES... HOW DO I CLASSIFY IT?

Calendars, appointment books, and journals are difficult to classify because they often contain both personal and work-related information. You must review this situation very carefully.

If your calendar was distributed to others for an official purpose it very well may be a record. Or, if the calendar was placed

record status if they each serve a separate administrative purpose and are controlled under different filing systems. Ask before you take.

HOW ABOUT WORKING PAPERS AND NON-RECORD MATERIALS... MAY I TAKE THEM WITH ME?

You may, with the Indian Affairs Records Officer's approval, take non-record copies of documents—especially materials you drafted, received, or otherwise acted upon. You should, however, begin retaining extra copies of such documents at the onset of your job. Even if you haven't done so, you may make arrangements to make selected copies prior to your departure.

In addition, you may take other types of materials that are not records because they do not meet the definition of records:

- Preliminary drafts not circulated for comment
- Some types of working papers
- Notes
- Other similar items that you would normally dispose of when they are superseded or no longer needed



WHAT IS A RECORD?

Records are documentary materials that you create or receive while you do your job that (1) provide evidence of the agency's organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and operations, or (2) contain information of value. Records may be in paper, film, tape, disk, or other physical form. They may be generated manually, electronically, or by other means.

WHAT IS NOT A RECORD?

Materials such as library or museum materials used solely for reference and exhibit purposes, extra copies of records kept for convenience of reference, and stocks of publications and processed documents are not records—they, however, do belong to and are controlled by the government.

WHAT ARE PERSONAL PAPERS?

Personal papers are documentary materials that are not used to conduct agency business. They include the following categories of material:

- Papers created before entering the government service: previous work files; political materials; reference files

in an agency file, it is likely to be an agency record. To avoid this kind of issue, keep two calendars—one for your personal activities and another to document work activities.

I HAVE COPIES OF GOVERNMENT RECORDS THAT I USE FOR RESEARCH... CAN I KEEP THEM?

You may keep extra copies of records for convenience of reference in your office or on your personal computer. You must, however, obtain permission from the Indian Affairs Records Officer before you remove any of these materials for personal use.

I AM RETIRING NEXT MONTH... WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY FILES BEFORE I LEAVE?

You are free to take records of a purely personal nature with you. You must, however, incorporate all other materials into your office's record keeping system so that they may be accessible to all staff who may need them.

WHAT ABOUT COPIES OF AN ORIGINAL DOCUMENT... MAY I KEEP THEM?

Determining whether a particular document is a record does not necessarily depend on whether it is an original or a copy. Multiple copies of the same document may each have

I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL THAT INCLUDES INFORMATION ABOUT A GOVERNMENT PROJECT WE ARE COLLABORATING ON AND INFORMATION ABOUT A CHARITY EVENT WE ARE BOTH INVOLVED IN OUTSIDE THE OFFICE... HOW SHOULD I FILE IT?

When you have a document that contains both official and personal information, you must copy or extract the information relating to government business and incorporate it into your agency files. You can then file the document with your personal papers.

ARE THERE INSTANCES WHEN MY PERSONAL PAPERS CAN LATER BE DETERMINED TO BE AGENCY RECORDS?

Yes. Depending on the circumstances surrounding their creation, maintenance and use, and disposition, personal papers may, when deciding Freedom of Information (FOIA) cases, be determined to be agency records. "Agency records" for the purposes of FOIA has a broader definition than found in 44 USC 3301.